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Wake leaders weigh timing of school bond referendum

BY T. KEUNG HUI
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RALEIGH
Wake County voters will be asked next year to borrow money to help pay for building and renovating schools, but it's uncertain whether the amount could be a record \$1.1 billion. Wake commissioners will decide over the next few months whether to put a school construction bond referendum on the May 2018 or November 2018 ballot. Commissioners will

“
PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW WHAT WE’VE GOT AND WHAT WE PLAN TO DO, AND WE DID WHAT WE SAID WE’D DO.

Sig Hutchinson, Wake Board of Commissioners chairman

also have to decide if they want to ask voters to approve a four-year bond plan of around \$1.1 billion or go with two smaller bond referendums in 2018 and 2020.

“We’re going to build these schools,” Commissioner John Burns said during Monday’s joint meeting between the commissioners and the Wake school board at the N.C. State McKim-

mon Center. “You can count on that. This question is about how we’re going to fund it.”

Wake leaders historically have shied away from putting a school construction bond of \$1 billion or more on the ballot out of fear that voters would reject such a large amount. Voters approved a record \$970 million school bond referendum in 2006 after commissioners and the school board got the amount under \$1 billion.

The last Wake school bond referendum of \$810 million was approved by voters in 2013.

County finance staff are working under a model that calls for raising the property tax rate between 3 cents and 3.5 cents to pay for the school system’s seven-year, \$2.3 billion school construction program. The program calls for at least 11 new schools and major renovations at existing schools.

Deputy County Manager Johnna Rogers said the tax increase would be the same if commissioners go with a two-year or four-year bond plan. Under a 3.5-cent increase, a family with a \$300,000 home would pay about \$105 more a year.

Under a four-year plan, a tax increase of up to 3.5 cents would fund a \$1.1 billion bond referendum in 2018. If approved, voters wouldn’t have to go to the polls for another school

SEE BONDS, 7A

‘Act of terror’ kills at least 8 in New York

BY COLLEEN LONG
AND JAKE PEARSON
Associated Press

NEW YORK
A man in a rented pickup truck drove onto a busy bicycle path near the World Trade Center memorial and mowed down people Tuesday, killing at least eight and injuring several others in what the mayor called “a particularly cowardly act of terror.”
The 29-year-old driver was shot by police after jumping out of the truck with what turned out to be a fake gun in each hand, officials said. He was taken into custody. His condition was not immediately disclosed.
Witnesses described a scene of panic and blood, with people screaming in fear and the path strewn with mangled bicycles and bodies that was soon covered with sheets. In addition to those killed, 11 people were seriously injured, police said.
New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo called it a “lone wolf” attack and said there was no evidence to suggest it was part of a wider plot.
Cities around the globe have been on alert against attacks by extremists in vehicles. The Islamic State has been encouraging its followers to mow down people, and England, France and Germany have all seen deadly vehicle attacks in recent months and years.
Police said the vehicle, a rented Home Depot truck, entered the bike path on West Street a few blocks from the new World Trade Center – the site of the deadliest terror attack in U.S. history – and mowed down several people. The truck also slammed into a small yellow school bus, injuring two adults and two children.
A paintball gun and a pellet gun were found at the scene, police said.
“This was an act of terror, and a particularly cowardly act of terror aimed at innocent civilians,” Mayor Bill de Blasio said.
At least two bodies could be seen lying on the path beneath tarps, and the front end of the

SEE TERROR, 10A



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Kristy Tate, left, and Barrett Godwin, both 8, explore the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park on Friday in Wilson. The official opening is Thursday.

Wilson set to open park full of spinning sculptures

BY DAVID MENCONI
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WILSON
When you visit the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park, bring a neck pillow. You’ll probably have the same reaction everyone does: to stare upward, open-mouthed, in amazement.
Watching these kinetic-sculpture creations whirl overhead once required finding Simpson’s farm out in the country, on Wiggins Mill Road near Lucama. But more than 30 of the late folk artist’s works have been gathered, restored and put on display around the perimeter of this 2-acre park in downtown Wilson. Years in the works, it has its grand opening Thursday, right before the annual North Carolina Whirligig Festival that celebrates Simpson and his creations.



ROBERT WILLETT News & Observer file photo

Vollis Simpson, pictured in 1999, took cast-off parts and created large kinetic sculptures. Simpson died in 2013 at 94.

“These are the big iconic ones people remember,” said park executive director Jeff Bell, who

has been staring up at these same whirligigs since he was growing up in Goldsboro. “My

If you go

Where: Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park is at 301 Goldsboro St. South in Wilson.

What: The park has its official grand opening 4-7 p.m. Thursday, with ribbon-cutting and live music. The North Carolina Whirligig Festival is 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday and noon-5 p.m. Sunday in and around the park in downtown Wilson. All events are free.

Details: wilsonwhirligigpark.org.

mom’s a science teacher, so anything with wind or science, we had to do. So we’d go out to Vollis’ farm, leave the headlights on and look while listening to the radio.”

The park formalizes what has been Wilson County’s biggest unofficial tourist attraction for years. It’s also a key piece of redevelopment efforts in the town of about 50,000 people 50 miles east of Raleigh – the

SEE WHIRLIGIG, 7A

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